

## WORDS

Words are powerful. They can make or break a child or an adult. They are especially hard on a child. Many children grow into adults remembering and judging themselves by the words spoken to them in childhood. Didn't we say as children or tell our children, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me." But they can and are often carried into adulthood and a person's opinion of themselves. Words can move people in a good way or a bad way. How many had to read the inspiring words of Lincoln's Gettysburg address? We had to memorize it. Or although fictional, Shakespeare's words given to Marc Antony on Caesar's death. Words that sounded comforting but designed to incite a crowd to riot. President Roosevelt inspired a nation with his "Fireside chats." President Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired and led us with words and actions. When a baby is born and growing, we look forward to that first word with Mother's hoping it will be Mama and Father's hoping for Dada. It seems like such a short time until they are not only speaking in sentences but paragraphs. I love reading them and using them. I love word puzzles and have recently been somewhat addicted to Wordle. But words can hurt us and recently I was reminded of this. A favorite song was on the radio, and it brought back a memory of my attempts at singing. Someone once pointed out this inability to me publicly and said I shouldn't sing. Truth: this was not a bulletin to me I had known this for years and was self-conscious enough. The words hurt and were a confirmation of what my father had said to me many years before. I confess I have no talent. I sang to my children, and both had a particular song that was only for them. They grew up with no apparent damage and both love music. I sang to my Grandchildren, and they also grew up none the worse for it. When my husband and I were dating, we would sing a lot of "Johnny Cash" in the car together. It was fun and he never ever criticized my singing. He not only encouraged me to sing but when I would say I was lousy at singing he would insist I was not. We would often sing together in the car until it became too difficult for us to get out. It was one of the joys of our marriage and our love. Love is not only blind but also deaf. Words have power. Once we say them, it is difficult and sometimes impossible to take them back. Words are powerful. They can make or break a child or an adult. They are especially hard on a child. Many children grow into adults remembering and being judged by the words spoken to them in childhood. Children can grow into the words spoken to them. I am always reminded of the power for good and for bad that our words can produce when we say these words: Psalm 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Dear Lord, we thank you for this day, for the sunshine and for the rain, for the breeze and the calm, for the night and the daylight. We ask you Lord to help us to reach out to the poor and the sick, for those who grieve, and for the forlorn, may our words be your words. May we be the hands and feet of Christ not only in our church, our neighborhood, our city, our country but in your world. Be with those who suffer because of war, of poverty, of oppression. Be with our country Lord, we are a troubled union. May we resist those who would seek to divide us. Be with our staff and leaders guide and protect them. Be with our Pastor, grant him safety and bless his ministry. Be with the Bishop and Cabinet, grant them wisdom and strength as they guide the church through changing times. Amen

Grace Epperson